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FOCUS

The Black Vote and the '86 Senate Races

Black Unemployment: Current Trends

Sharon Pratt Dixon: Rising to the Top in the DNC

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Joint Center for Political Studies

Perspective

JCPS Launches Associates Program

The Joint Center has undertaken a new venture—a **National Associates Program** that creates a partnership between us and our friends and supporters and that will, we hope, establish a prestigious nationwide network of people who share a commitment to racial justice. *Focus* readers will shortly receive detailed information about this program, but I wanted to share my own perspective on it with you in advance.

The **Associates Program** did not result from a sudden decision, but was something we have wanted to create for quite a while. For as I have gone around the country these past few years speaking to community groups, professional organizations, academicians, and others, I have become increasingly aware that there exists a thirst for information, for data and analyses, not only about black Americans themselves but also about policies that affect the lives and livelihoods of black Americans. Everywhere I go, I find blacks seeking greater knowledge of public policy—and, even more, seeking greater involvement and influence at all levels of government.

This kind of interest from people who specialize in civil rights issues is to be expected. But the same interest is also being expressed by people who are active in fraternal and social service organizations, in religious organizations, and in professional associations, and by people who are bankers, accountants, lawyers, and government employees—by people who wish to support the struggle for justice in ways that suit their personal interests and professional talents.

In short, many people—black and white—are seeking a new partnership for social change. They are more interested in research than rhetoric; more interested in political mobilization than protest; and more interested in achieving specific objectives than in pursuing loosely defined goals.

All this reinforces our belief that the United States has reached the stage, foreseen by W. E. B. Du Bois some 40 years ago, when the struggle for racial justice has become frighteningly complex and when "disciplined intelligence" must be applied to the continuing search for equality and social justice. The Joint Center hopes to mobilize and support this disciplined intelligence through our new **National Associates Program**—our partnership with you and others who share our concerns.

What is this program all about and how will it help you—and us—become more influential and effective in the political arena?

In return for a very low annual fee, Associates will receive a number of benefits, in addition to monthly issues of *Focus*:

- a free Joint Center monograph;
- discounts on selected publications;
- access to our extensive in-house resource materials;
- use of a toll-free inquiry line;
- invitations to JCPS conferences and symposia; and
- an Associates membership card and certificate.

And at least as important as all these tangible benefits is the opportunity for Associates to participate in an annual membership survey of their opinions on issues confronting black Americans. This survey will help us identify the most pressing issues for the black community and will enable us to respond better to requests for information and data.

When you receive our invitation to become a charter member of the **Associates Program,** read it carefully and then treat yourself to a one-year membership.

Together, more effectively than ever before, we will be able to help shape the public policies that affect us all—applying disciplined intelligence to the struggle for social justice!

Eddie N. Williams
President

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Sharon Pratt Dixon: Rising to the Top in the DNC

by Deborah Davis and Linda F. Williams

(The authors are, respectively, special assistant to the president and a senior research associate at the Joint Center.)

As the first black and first woman treasurer of the Democratic National Committee (DNC)—the body that conducts the Democratic party's major campaign activities—Sharon Pratt Dixon is one of the movers and shakers in national politics today. Her political accomplishments are complemented by her business success: she is the first woman to become a vice president of the Potomac Electric Power Company (PEPCO) in Washington, D.C. (she is in charge of the company's Consumer Affairs Division).

Becoming Political

As far back as Sharon Pratt Dixon can remember, she has been interested in politics. She fondly recalls "being preoccupied with the first nationally televised presidential debate"—Dwight Eisenhower and Adlai Stevenson in 1952. She was in elementary school.

Born and raised in Washington, D.C., Dixon grew up at a time and in a place that could not have offered much promise to a young girl increasingly fascinated by politics. Washington in the 1950s did not have home rule, and its residents could not vote. Nevertheless, her family encouraged her to develop political interests.

In those days before television was common, the Pratts spent their evenings in conversation. And, Dixon says, "They didn't care how old you were, you had to come to the dinner table armed with facts and be able to argue your point of view, whatever the topic—politics or religion, it didn't matter. The family encouraged you to engage in those kinds of dialogues and think your way through them, and be able to take it on the chin when they came back with their retorts."

Dixon's dinner table experiences left their mark. In high school she was elected class president, and as an undergraduate at Howard she encouraged her sorority sisters to stop running for homecoming queen and to run instead for student council president. She herself ran (unsuccessfully) for student council president.

After receiving her B.A. degree from Howard, she went on to get her law degree, also at Howard. She then taught at Antioch Law School in the District for four years and practiced with her father, attorney Carlisle E. Pratt, for two years.

But she had long dreamed of going into politics, and she has always believed in "going after your dreams." So with the support of her family and friends and with mentors like the late Patricia Roberts Harris (former Secretary of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services) and Flaxie Pinkett (president of John R. Pinkett, Inc., a real estate company), she entered local Democratic politics.

In 1968, when the office of school board member first became elective in the District, she worked in the unsuccessful campaign of Arrington Dixon, now her former husband. In 1974, when voters in the District elected their first home rule government, she helped him win election to the city council.

Then, according to Dixon, "the new generation that came into office as a result of the first District election formed a 'Unity Slate' to elect people to the Democratic State Committee and to elect our two top party officials, national committeeman and national committeewoman." Dixon was nominated for the state committee and won. In 1977, after the District's Democratic national committeewoman, Pat Harris, became Secretary of Housing and Urban Development in President Jimmy Carter's administration, Dixon ran for the office Harris had vacated, was elected, "and just stayed with it." She has been in the party's leadership cadre ever since.

National Party Treasurer

In 1985, she wanted to influence the direction and philosophic thrust of the party. She therefore pursued the office of DNC chair and leveraged her support for that office to gain election, instead, as treasurer. Her primary base of support was blacks, women, and key business leaders (such as Peter O'Malley, president of the Greater Washington Board of Trade, and W. Reid Thompson, chairman of the board and chief executive officer of PEPCO). The office of treasurer is a natural one for her, since she had long stressed the importance of economic issues.

As DNC treasurer, Dixon is officially the custodian of monies. Her functions are to keep track of receipts and disbursements and to get a good return on DNC funds. Since she is one of the few national committee members who comes from the private sector and works for a corporation, she also helps raise money.

Her real importance as a member of the DNC executive committee, however, transcends her official functions. As she puts it, "real power is rarely seen publicly. By and large many decisions are made in the back rooms and board rooms of this country." She wants to be—and she is—in those back rooms and board rooms, and therefore does not think she will run for public office.

Power is a key word for her, as is *strategy*. "I enjoy strategy. I enjoy the process of trying to anticipate your opponent's move. How to capture power. How to build coalitions. How to disarm the opposition. I love competition." At the same time, close associates say, she is a woman of integrity who will file a minority report and speak up when necessary.

The Future of the Democratic Party

Dixon's view of the Democratic party is that right now it is in the throes of a great transformation. It is seeking to develop a new vision for America, one that will unite the party's potpourri of constituencies. These constituencies include the members of the upper-middle class for whom the civil rights and antiwar movements were formative experiences; organized labor; urban ethnics; blacks and other minorities; and white Southerners. According to Dixon,

> the Democratic party's greatest strength is its diversity. So to me, my challenge—which is a real opportunity and also a source of frustration—is to help play a role so we will see that our diversity is our strength. We must do as Ronald Reagan did with the Republican party: take what we've got and market it to the American people. Don't try to emulate the other person's product. Take your own product and sell it to the American people.

Her analysis of what happened in the 1984 presidential election is that the Democratic candidates lacked a unifying vision and, by bartering with each group

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The Black Vote and the '86 Senate Races

by Linda F. Williams

(The author is a senior research associate at the Joint Center.)

Scholars and analysts generally pay little attention to the importance of black votes in electing U.S. senators. After all, Senate elections are statewide, and in no state are blacks a majority of the voting-age population. But what the scholars and analysts often overlook is that the black vote has sometimes played a critical role in senatorial elections, and this year, in at least four states, the black vote may again be pivotal.

Two years ago, black voters made the difference in the election of three Democrats to the Senate: incumbents Howard Heflin of Alabama and Carl Levin of Michigan and challenger Paul Simon of Illinois (who was opposing Republican incumbent Charles Percy). Each of the three was in a close race, and each Democrat's Republican opponent received a majority of the white vote. The black vote, however, went so heavily for the Democrat that it provided the margin of victory.

In a sense, of course, black votes are important in all Senate races. Blacks compose part of the electorate in every state and their votes, like all other votes, obviously affect election results. But in some places the black vote is more important than it is in other places. In Illinois in 1986, for example, Democratic incumbent Alan Dixon is by and large considered to be "probably secure" in his reelection bid precisely because of his overwhelming black support. In 1980 Dixon won only 48 percent of the white vote, but with 92 percent of the black vote he had a comfortable margin of victory.

In certain states, the black vote is more than important—it is critical. This is true of states with a very close race and a black voting-age population of at least 5 percent of the total electorate. Many senatorial elections are won by a margin of 5 percent or less. Of the seats up for election in 1986, fully half of them were won in 1980 by 5 percent or less. So if blacks make up more than 5 percent of a state's total voting-age population and the race is close, the black vote may be decisive. This assumes, of course, that blacks will register and vote in large numbers for one party. (Black voter participation for the past 20 years has been overwhelmingly Democratic.)

At present, there are 10 states in which blacks make up 5 percent or more of the voting-age population and where the outcome of the Senate race is still at least somewhat uncertain. In 6 of the 10 (California, Florida, Maryland, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Pennsylvania), it looks now as if a heavily Democratic black vote will give the Democrats a substantial boost. In the other four (Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Missouri), high black registration and turnout for the Democrats could do more than give the Democrats a boost: it could provide the party with its margin of victory. What follows is an in-depth assessment of the Senate races in those four states.

Alabama

In Alabama, where blacks compose 23 percent of the state's voting-age population, the two leading contenders are the incumbent, Republican Jeremiah Denton, and Democratic challenger U.S. Representative Richard Shelby. For blacks, this is a choice between two staunch conservatives.

Denton is best known for his resistance to abortion, his strong support for federal action on issues involving personal morality, and his hawkishness on questions of national defense. He has rarely voted for major civil rights legislation and was one of only four senators opposing creation of the King holiday to the very end. In 1984 he received only a 17 percent favorable rating from the Leadership Conference for Civil Rights (LCCR)—an organization that measures the extent to which the positions taken by a member of Congress agree with the positions taken by civil rights organizations.

Shelby's LCCR approval rating is 40 percent—low, but higher than Denton's. And even though he, too, opposed creation of the King holiday (and in 1981 was 1 of only 24 House members to oppose extension of the Voting Rights Act), blacks may view him as the better choice. Moreover, his conservative record gives him an excellent chance to win the votes of conservative rural whites who would otherwise vote for Denton.

The race seems likely to become increasingly close. Denton has a comfortable lead of 15-25 points, but Alabama is heavily Democratic and Denton allegedly performed few constituent services in his first term. Democrats are portraying Denton—who has spent most of his adult life outside the state—as unconcerned about local economic problems and insufficiently supportive of the state's economic development efforts.

A large black vote could give Shelby a chance to win. However, he will have to mend some fences with blacks, and black voter registration groups will have to mobilize significant support on his behalf—but a high black turnout is possible and could make the difference.

In 1980, when Denton received 57 percent of the white vote, he got only 9 percent of the black vote (and that figure is not expected to rise in 1986). He received 50.2 percent of the total vote and won by only 40,187 votes. But between 1980 and 1984, registration and turnout rates in Alabama grew faster for blacks than for whites ("turnout" is used here to mean percentage of the voting-age population). The registration rate for blacks grew by 9 percentage points, whereas for whites it grew by only 5 percentage points. The black-white gap in reported voter turnout decreased from 10.3 percentage points in 1980 to 8 percentage points in 1984. Moreover, two black candidates (Samuel Taylor and Judge William McKinley Branch) are running for the congressional seat Shelby is vacating in the Alabama 7th district (Tuscaloosa), and their efforts to mobilize voters on their own behalf could inspire substantially more blacks to register and vote.

Georgia

In Georgia, where blacks constitute 27 percent of the voting-age population, Republican incumbent Mack Mattingly is running for reelection. In 1980, when he successfully challenged incumbent Herman Talmadge, he received 39 percent of the black vote. Since his margin of victory was very slim—only 27,652 votes—the black vote clearly helped him.

Mattingly's share of the black vote in 1980 was unusually high for a Republican, especially a southern Republican. However, this high level of support may have been due, in part, to the fact that his opponent, Talmadge, not only was a long-time segregationist but also had been denounced by the Senate for financial misconduct. Many observers have pointed out that in 1986 blacks will probably have more of a choice (none of the Democrats seeking the nomination will have

Talmadge's problems), and blacks could vote heavily for Mattingly's Democratic opponent.

Seeking the Democratic nomination for the right to oppose Mattingly are U.S. Representative Wyche Fowler, Hamilton Jordan, former aide to President Jimmy Carter, attorney David Garrett, and State Representative John Russell. The front runner is Fowler, who represents the majority-black 5th district (Atlanta) and is popular among blacks. He is expected to get very strong black support in the primary and, if he wins, in the general election as well.

If Fowler does not strengthen his position among rural whites, he could have trouble in the Democratic primary or face a close race against Mattingly in the general election. Old-fashioned, small-town politics remain strong in Georgia, and until now Fowler has proven himself only in a district that is overwhelmingly urban and heavily black. He would have more of a chance if he could stake a claim to the enormous rural vote that almost reelected Talmadge in 1980 despite his problems. Therefore, Fowler is spending much of his time trying to establish rapport with rural Democratic voters, reminding them of his roots in two small Georgia towns, Albany and Dawson.

Mattingly has some major advantages. He is far ahead in fund-raising, and President Reagan has pledged strong support. Moreover, Mattingly might benefit from the intraparty debate among Democrats as they campaign for the August 12 primary—and for the September 2 runoff, if no candidate receives at least 50 percent of the vote in the primary election.

The Democrats are predicting that in the general election, white votes will split about evenly. In that case a heavy black vote might well determine the outcome. And with numerous black Democrats (including Julian Bond, John Lewis, Jan Douglas, and Charles Johnson) running for the party's nomination as candidate for Fowler's seat in the 5th district, black registration and turnout could be quite high.

Louisiana

Democratic incumbent Russell Long, who got 99 percent of the black vote in 1980, is retiring. The two major candidates for his seat are Republican U.S. Representative W. Henson Moore (6th district—Baton Rouge) and Democratic U.S. Representative John Breaux (7th district—Lake Charles). Moore has an LCCR rating of 33 percent; Breaux has a rating of 50 percent.

The real battleground will be New Orleans, which accounts for one-third of the state's votes. The black vote is extremely important there, and for several decades no Republican candidate has received more than 6 percent of it. Breaux has the backing of the New Orleans black Democratic leadership.

Moore is presently leading in the polls, but Breaux is rapidly narrowing the gap, and turnout could decide the winner. Blacks, who compose 25 percent of Louisiana's voting-age population, had a registration rate of 75 percent in 1984, up from 69 percent in 1980, and the reported black turnout rate in 1984 was higher than the white rate. (Louisiana, Mississippi, and a few other states are exceptions to the general rule that black turnout rates are lower than white turnout rates.) Breaux could also benefit from the campaign of Faye Williams for the Democratic nomination in the 8th congressional district (Alexandria). Williams, who is black, is seeking to increase black registration and turnout.

Missouri

Democratic Senator Thomas Eagleton is retiring. Running for his seat are Democratic Lieutenant Governor Harriett Woods and former Republican Governor Christopher Bond. Polls show the race to be close. Bond is attacking Woods's record of supporting legalized abortion and busing. Woods, who was popular with blacks and urban whites when she ran for lieutenant governor in 1984, is trying to build up her rural support by campaigning heavily among farm groups affected by the state's declining farm economy.

Blacks compose only 8 percent of the voting-age population. Despite this small percentage, their support was essential to Eagleton in 1980, when he failed to receive a majority of the white vote and would have lost without black support (he received 96 percent of the black vote). Woods has supported civil rights far more strongly than Bond has, so blacks are expected to vote for her just as heavily as they voted for Eagleton.

The Importance of the '86 Elections

Blacks, then, can make a substantial difference in four senatorial elections (and may be influential in at least six others). But much depends on whether the various candidates reach out to black voters and whether blacks register and vote in sizable numbers.

One problem is that not all voters fully realize the significance of voting in a mid-term election. They may not realize that in 1986, political control of the Senate and a certain psychological domination of Congress are at stake. If the Republicans keep control of the Senate, people will assume that they will retain that control for years to come, since more Democratic seats will be up for election in 1988 and 1990 than are up for election this year. However, if the Democrats regain control of the Senate, the general feeling will be that the "normal" Democratic majority has been restored.

Moreover, if the Democrats succeed in their uphill battle to regain control of the Senate, their prospects for the presidential election of 1988 will be stronger. Similarly, if the Republicans maintain control of the Senate, their presidential prospects will look brighter.

Control of the Senate and Policy Direction

The results of the 1986 elections will probably be felt in three areas in particular: budgetary decisions, policy priorities, and judicial nominations.

The makeup of the Senate, as decided by the 1986 elections, will have a lot to do with whether Congress approves stringent budget requests similar to the one the president has submitted in the current fiscal year. The current request seeks to increase defense spending by 12 percent while cutting domestic programs by 14 percent.

The makeup of the Senate will also determine whether the Civil Rights Restoration Act, bills to create jobs, and other measures favored by blacks are passed.

Finally, since only the Senate can confirm nominees for the federal judiciary, civil rights advocates look to the Senate to be a bulwark against attempts to put on the bench men (or women) such as Jefferson Sessions III (recently nominated for the U.S. District Court in Alabama). Sessions has said he believes that the Voting Rights Act is an "intrusive piece of legislation."

The importance of the 1986 elections is great. Candidates seeking black support are aware of that, as are the organizations working to increase black voter registration and turnout.

Black Unemployment: Current Trends

by Lynn C. Burbridge

(The author, an economist, is a research associate at the Joint Center.)

Recent employment trends can give a sense of either optimism or pessimism, depending on which figures one examines. Similarly, predictions of how the economy (and therefore unemployment) will change in the next few months vary, depending on the trends an analyst emphasizes.

To assess the current unemployment situation, we present below two sets of unemployment data to give two different perspectives. One set of data is average quarterly unemployment rates (Table 1); the other is monthly unemployment rates (Table 2). Quarterly figures show that unemployment declined—on the average—in the last quarter of 1985 in comparison with the first quarter of that same year. But month-to-month figures for the past six months show that although unemployment declined at first, it then rose again to previous levels.

In predicting the future, analysts feel pessimistic if they focus on historical patterns, economic activity for the last quarter of 1985, and increases in joblessness in the manufacturing sector of the economy. Analysts who focus, instead, on the recent devaluation of the dollar and on falling oil prices and interest rates feel buoyant about the immediate economic future.

Table 1. Employment Statistics for the Civilian Labor Force, by Age, Sex, and Race: Quarters I and IV, 1985, and Quarter I, 1986 (Averages)

	Quarter I 1985	Quarter IV 1985	Quarter I 1986
Totals (millions)			
Civilian labor force	115.2	116.2	117.0
Civilian employment	106.7	108.0	108.8
Civilian unemployment	8.4	8.2	8.2
Unemployment Rates			
Overall	7.3	7.0	7.1
Overall black	15.5	15.1	14.6
Overall white	6.3	6.0	6.1
Adult black males	13.5	13.5	12.9
Adult white males	5.4	5.2	5.3
Adult black females	13.2	12.8	12.2
Adult white females	5.8	5.4	5.7
Black teenagers	42.4	40.7	41.6
White teenagers	15.4	16.1	15.2

Quarterly Averages and Monthly Rates

Table 1 presents average employment and unemployment data, by age, race, and sex, for the first and last quarters of 1985 and the first quarter of 1986. Between early 1985 and early 1986, average civilian unemployment increased by two million. However, during the same period roughly the same number of people—two million—entered the labor force. Therefore, the total number of unemployed workers (more than eight million) changed very little.

This constancy in the number of unemployed is reflected in the overall unemployment rate, which dropped only 0.2 percent between early 1985 and early 1986. In the first quarter of 1985 it was 7.3 percent. After dropping to 7.0 percent in the last quarter of 1985, it rose to 7.1 percent in the first quarter of 1986.

The reduction in the unemployment rate was greater for blacks than for whites. For adult black males, the unemployment rate dropped from an average of 13.5 percent in the first quarter of 1985 to 12.9 percent during this past quarter. For adult black women the drop was larger—from 13.2 to 12.2 percent. Nevertheless, the unemployment rate for blacks overall is still double the rate for whites, and the unemployment rate for black teenagers—although it declined 0.8 percent between early 1985 and early 1986—is still above 40 percent.

These quarterly averages do not mean that unemployment is changing for the better, because other evidence presents a different picture. For example, month-to-month changes in the overall unemployment rate (see Table 2) indicate that the economy may be slowing down. From January to February of this year, the overall unemployment rate increased 0.6 percentage points—the largest one-month increase in five years; and even though the rate declined in March, it did so only slightly. Government forecasters attributed the January-to-February increase to poor weather conditions and, perhaps, to a statistical fluke. But many other analysts are concerned and think the figures indicate that the economy is slowing down and can no longer absorb more workers.

Reasons for Concern

These concerns are based on three factors. The first is historical precedent. Since World War II, business cycles have lasted an average of 45 months. (A business cycle is the period between the low points of two successive recessions.) The previous recession reached bottom in November 1982, so we are now in the 41st month of the present business cycle. The law of averages, therefore, makes it likely that we are already in the down phase of the current cycle and are approaching a new bottom, or trough.

Table 2. Unemployment Rates, October 1985–March 1986 (Civilian Labor Force)

	October 1985	November 1985	December 1985	January 1986	February 1986	March 1986
Whites	6.1	5.9	5.9	5.7	6.4	6.2
Blacks	14.9	15.6	14.9	14.4	14.8	14.7
Overall	7.1	7.0	6.9	6.7	7.3	7.2

The second reason for pessimism is that on March 20 the U.S. Department of Commerce lowered its estimate of how much the gross national product grew during the last quarter of 1985. In December 1985, Commerce predicted that the last-quarter growth rate would be 3.2 percent, but three months later, when it had more information about how the economy had actually behaved, it revised its estimate downward to only 0.7 percent. (Preliminary estimates for the first quarter of 1986 again predict a 3.2 percent growth rate, but this, too, is subject to later revision.)

The third reason for pessimism is based on changes that have taken place during the past year in the manufacturing sector of the economy. In March 1986, the manufacturing sector lost 42,000 jobs. (Over half of them were in the oil and gas extraction industry. This suggests that a decline in the price of oil, although advantageous at the gas pump, could lengthen unemployment lines.) All together, 130,000 jobs have been lost in manufacturing since March 1985. Because blacks, particularly males, rely heavily on jobs in manufacturing, this trend does not bode well for black employment in the future. To be sure, the number of jobs in the services sector of the economy has been growing, but wages there are considerably lower than in manufacturing. Therefore, the service jobs being created cannot be considered acceptable replacements of the manufacturing jobs being lost.

The Reagan Administration's Optimism

Nevertheless, government spokespersons remain optimistic about the potential for economic growth, pointing to the recent devaluation of the dollar, the declining price of oil, and declining interest rates. The devaluation of the dollar, they believe, will increase U.S. exports, thereby reducing the U.S. trade deficit and increasing employment in the industries that rely on exports. They also believe that the declining price of oil, although bad for employment in that industry, will stimulate the growth of U.S. industries by reducing their operating costs. Finally, since declining interest rates mean that investors pay less to borrow money, investment may be stimulated.

Of course, nobody knows for sure whether recent incentives for growth—the devaluation, the lowered price of oil, and falling interest rates—will effectively counteract the forces that tend to produce an economic slowdown. In any case, whatever happens within the economy during the next six months of this congressional election year may affect not only employment but also the makeup of the next House and Senate.

Sharon Pratt Dixon . . .

(Continued from page 3)

separately, made the Democrats appear to be the party of special interests. What the party needs, she thinks, is to formulate a theme that convincingly presents the Democratic party as the party able to deliver the two things Americans most want their government to deliver. Those two things are economic security and world peace.

It is precisely the electorate's yearning for security that Dixon sees as the source of President Reagan's popularity. "I don't think it's what he stands for. I think it's his decisiveness, his sense of authority, and his suggestion of comfort." So the Democrats, she believes, should present their party as the party of the 21st century, ready and armed to create a feeling of security by meeting the challenges that lie ahead. "Prosperity and parity" is what all Americans want, she claims—economic growth that benefits all groups equally. The test for emerging Democratic leaders and potential presidential candidates should be who can articulate that theme most persuasively.

Blacks and the Democratic Party

In addition to helping her party regain the presidency, Dixon would like to be useful in forging black unity within the party. A Mondale supporter in the battle for the 1984 Democratic presidential nomination, she agrees that Jesse Jackson played and continues to play a very important role as a leader of black Americans and a leader of the Democratic party. "As long as Jesse Jackson speaks up and speaks loudly, that's wonderful. We will capitalize on that to maximize our leverage within the party so it remains sensitive and responsive to the needs of black Americans."

But part of the problem for black Democrats in 1984, as Dixon sees it, is that they did not coordinate their electoral strategies or identify a "bottom line" that they could all agree on. In her view, in 1984 blacks used two strategies: some tried to be effective within the party and others sought to exert pressure on the party from without. She argues that blacks must continue to pursue a variety of strategies, but that those strategies should be coordinated to make the bottom line the same for all blacks.

In 1984, according to Dixon, blacks raised many questions about the relationship between blacks and the Democratic party but failed to provide answers. Dixon uses the analogy of a trial lawyer, who never asks a witness a question without expecting a particular answer and without knowing how the worst possible answer can be made to redound to his or her client's benefit. Black Americans, too, she believes, must not raise questions without having in mind the answers they want, if they expect to maximize their leverage within the party.

Yet, Dixon is optimistic about the future of blacks in the Democratic party and in American politics. She points out that blacks

> did not even get into the electoral game until 1965, and in the space of 20-plus years, we now have had a serious candidate for president [Jesse Jackson], we occupy mayoralties in many major cities [Chicago, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and others], we now have statewide elected officials [Richard Austin, secretary of state in Michigan; Roland Burris, comptroller in Illinois; and L. Douglas Wilder, lieutenant governor in Virginia], and we may have a House majority whip [Charles Rangel, (D-NY)]. . . . If anyone says we are anything but survivors, they are wrong. What we did in 20 years eclipses what any group has done since arriving in this country. . . . We're new but we're good, so having learned from '84, I hope that in '88 we will unite our inside-outside strategies into a bottom line and maximize our power to achieve our goals.

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Telescope

Correction

In the March issue of *Focus*, the article "Blacks and Welfare: Sorting Out the Facts" incorrectly states that one in five black men will die of homicide. According to the 1983 statistics of the Bureau of Justice Statistics of the U.S. Department of Justice, a black man in America had a 1-in-21 probability of being murdered in his lifetime, a black woman a 1-in-104 probability, a white man a 1-in-131 probability, and a white woman a 1-in-369 probability.

Ford Foundation President's Speech Stresses Education

In a keynote speech before 1,000 people at the Joint Center's ninth annual dinner on March 26, Ford Foundation President Franklin A. Thomas called for a renewed commitment to excellence and equal opportunity in education to meet the challenges resulting from the changing social structure of the nation.

In the face of the relative aging of the American population and an increase in the proportion of black youth, Thomas noted that "the nation's future will rest on fewer youngsters than in the past, and more of them will be black and brown."

Maintaining that black youths are not now being adequately prepared to assume a greater share of responsibility for the nation's future, Thomas called for strengthening federal and local commitments, incentives, and support systems to reverse negative trends.

New Black Presidential Appointee

President Reagan has appointed Gwendolyn S. King to the position of Deputy Assistant to the President and Director of the Office of Intergovernmental Affairs. She is one of the highest ranking black officials in the administration.

Ms. King will be working with governors, state legislators, and local elected officials to help improve communication between them and the White House on issues of intergovernmental concern—for example, welfare reform, federalism, and liability insurance.

From 1979-1986, Ms. King was director of the Washington office of Pennsylvania Governor Richard Thornburgh (R). Before holding that position she was legislative assistant to U.S. Senator John Heinz (R-PA); Division Director of Consumer Complaints at the Department of Housing and Urban Development; and a Senior Health Desk Officer for the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare.

She is married to Colbert I. King, executive vice president of Riggs National Bank in Washington, D.C., and a member of the Joint Center's Research Advisory Committee.

Sharon Pratt Dixon . . .

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Dixon and the Democratic Party

Dixon certainly does not hold herself out as "the leader." She does, though, hope to play a constructive role in uniting black Democrats into a strong political force to ensure that the Democratic party is sensitive and responsive to the needs of all disadvantaged Americans, including those who are black. She promises to keep applying pressure to the Democratic party to make it realize that its diversity is its strength, and to keep applying pressure to Americans to make them realize that working with, not dividing against, one another is in their collective interest.

Juggling Family and Career

When asked how she handles two high-powered jobs and two teenage daughters, Dixon says, "It's not easy. It takes a lot of discipline and 20-hour days. But fortunately, I have great staffs at both PEPCO and the DNC."

She also has her family's love and encouragement, and good friends and mentors. Put all that together, mix it with a lot of luck, and what emerges is a smart, attractive, aggressive, and committed black woman who occupies a unique niche in this country's political and racial history.

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